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SUBJECT: TURKISH CYPRIOTS SHRUG OFF DANISH CARTOONS,
ANTI-U.S. FILM

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1. Although the Turkish Cypriot press has given significant coverage (mainly through republished wire service stories) to the controversy surrounding publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed (reftel), the largely secular Turkish Cypriot community appears to be taking the whole issue in stride. We have heard no reports of any violence or significant protests against any western interests in the north over the matter.

2. As is usually the case, questions not directly related to the Cyprus problem are of little interest to most Cypriots. One prominent politician laughed out loud when we asked him about the cartoons, saying Turkish Cypriots "just don't care." A handful of local pundits have commented on the cartoon controversy, mostly to urge calm by deploring both the violence of foreign protests and the insensitivity of newspapers that printed the caricatures. The top Turkish Cypriot imam, Ahmet Yonluer, has publicly called for restraint and suggested the publishers of the cartoons should apologize for "disturbing the peace." He told the Ambassador last week that he would exercise his influence to keep things calm and "project the true face of Islam." Meanwhile the "Union of Religious Workers" (which represents the north's Muslim clergy) issued a statement saying that "Muslims should not be involved in burning flags or attacking people."

3. Post will report on reactions to the cartoons by Muslims in the Greek Cypriot south septel.

4. Meanwhile, the anti-American Turkish movie "Valley of the Wolves: Iraq" has opened in at least one north Cyprus theater. While it is too early to tell how many Turkish Cypriots will see the film, we expect it to attract a good audience since the movie is based on a popular TV series. Nonetheless, we do not expect the movie to stoke up any serious anti-American feeling -- partly because the U.S. position on the Cyprus problem has won us a significant store of goodwill among Turkish Cypriots, and partly because the Turkish Cypriot audience appears sophisticated enough to separate fact from cinematic fantasy. One embassy contact compared the popularity of the "Valley of the Wolves" series among Turkish Cypriots to the popularity of "The X Files" among Americans -- both are popular, exciting conspiracy stories, but nobody mistakes them for real life.

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